

What the South can do. How the Southern states can make themselves masters of the situation. To the legislatures of the Southern states ... Henry B. Blackwell. New York, January 15, 1867. New York. Robert J. Johnston, printer, 33, Beekman St. [1867].

WHAT THE SOUTH CAN DO.

How the Southern States can make themselves Masters of the Situation.

TO THE LEGISLATURES OF THE SOUTHERN STATES.

I WRITE to you as the intellectual leaders of the Southern people—men who should be able and willing to transcend the prejudices of section—to suggest the only ground of settlement between North and South which, in my judgment, can be successfully adopted.

Let me state the political situation. The radical principles of the North are immovably fixed upon negro suffrage as a condition of Southern State reconstruction. The proposed Constitutional Amendment is not regarded as a finality. It satisfies nobody, not even its authors. In the minds of the Northern people the negroes are now associated with the idea of loyalty to the Union. They are considered citizens. They are respected as “our allies.” It is believed in the North that a majority of the white people of the South are at heart the enemies of the Union. The advocates of negro suffrage daily grow stronger and more numerous.

On the other hand a majority of the Southern white population are inflexibly opposed to negro suffrage in any form, universal or qualified, and are prepared to resist its introduction by every means in their power. In alliance with the President and the Northern Democracy, they protest against any and all terms of reconstruction, demand unconditional readmission, and await in gloomy silence the Republican initiative.

This absolute and growing antagonism can only end, if continued, in one of two results: either in a renewal of civil war, or in a concession by the South of political equality to the negro.

But in case of war, the South cannot possibly succeed. The North is to-day far stronger in men and money, in farms and factories, than she was in 1860.

She is now trained to war, conscious of overwhelming strength, flushed with victory, and respected, as never before, by the nations of Europe. Moreover, she is much more united in political sentiment. Do not again deceive yourselves. If you should resort to arms, the North would be practically unanimous. The President would instantly be impeached and a radical successor appointed.

The South has lost social unity with the loss of slavery. She cannot fight better than before. And the braver her action, the more terrible would be her fate.

Gentlemen, these are facts—not theories. Wise men try to see things as they are, uncolored by opinion or preference.

The interest of both North and South, since they must live together, is peace, harmony and real fraternity. No adjustment can fully succeed unless it is acceptable to both sections. Therefore the statesman and patriot must find a common ground as a basis of permanent reconciliation.

Now the radicalism of the North is actual, organic and progressive. Recognise the fact!

But if “governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed”—if “taxation without representation is tyranny”—and “on these two commandments hang all the (Republican) law and the prophets”—then *these propositions are as applicable to women as to negroes*.

“Consistency is a jewel.” The principle is so broad that, if you accept it *in its entirety*, you can afford to lead—not follow.

The population of the late slave States is about twelve million; eight million white, four million black. The radicals demand suffrage for the black men on the ground named above. Very good. Say to them, as Mr. Cowan said to the advocates of negro male suffrage in the District, “*apply your principle!* Give suffrage to all men and women of mature age and sound mind, and we will accept it as the basis of State and national reconstruction.”

Consider the result from the Southern stand-point.

Your four millions of Southern white women will counterbalance your four millions of negro men and women, and thus the political supremacy of your white race will remain unchanged.

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Think well of this. It is a calculation of the relative political influences of white women and of negroes which perhaps your people have not yet considered. Let us make the statement in figures. Estimating one male voter to every five persons, your present vote is:

White males 1,600,000

Add white females 1,600,000

Total white voters 3,200,000

Negro males 800,000

Negro females 800,000

Total negro voters 1,600,000

Suppose all the negroes vote one way and all the whites the other, your white majority would be 1,600,000— *equal to your present total vote*. Thus you would control your own State legislation. Meanwhile, your influence in the councils of the nation will be greater than ever before, because your emancipated slaves will be counted in the basis of representation, instead of as formerly, in the ratio of five for three.

In the light of the history of your Confederacy, can any Southerner fear to trust the women of the South with the ballot?

But the propriety of your making the proposal lies deeper than any consideration of sectional expediency. If you must try the Republican experiment, try it fully and fairly. Since you are compelled to union with the North, remove every seed of future controversy. If you are to share the future government of your States with a race you deem naturally and hopelessly inferior, avert the social chaos, which seems to you so imminent, by utilizing the intelligence and patriotism of the wives and daughters of the South.

Plant yourselves upon the logical Northern principle. Then no new demands can ever be made upon you. No future inroads of fanaticism can renew sectional discord.

The effect upon the North would be *to revolutionize political parties*. "Justice satisfies everybody." The negro, thus protected against oppression by possessing the ballot, would cease to be the prominent object of philanthropic interest. Northern distrust, disarmed by Southern magnanimity, would give place to the liveliest sentiments of confidence and regard. The great political desideratum would be attained. *The negro question would be forever removed from the political arena*. National parties would again crystallize upon legitimate questions of national interest—questions of tariff, finance and foreign relations. The disastrous conflict between Federal and State jurisdiction would cease. 4 North and South, no longer hammer and anvil, would forget and forgive the past. School-houses and churches would be our fortifications and intrenchments. Capital and population would flow, like the Mississippi, towards the Gulf.

The black race would gravitate by the law of nature towards the tropics. The memory and spirit of Washington would be cherished; and every deed of genuine gallantry and humanity would be treasured as the common glory of the republic.

Do you say that Northern Republicans would not accept such a proposition? They cannot avoid it.

The matter is in your own hands. In New Jersey (then a slave State) from 1776 to 1807, a period of thirty-one years, women and negroes voted on precisely the same footing as white men. No catastrophe, social or political, ensued.

The following is an extract from the New Jersey election law of 1797:

"Sec. 9. Every voter shall openly and in full view deliver *his or her ballot*, which shall be a single written ticket containing the names of the person, or persons, for whom *he or she votes*, " etc.

Your Southern Legislatures can extend suffrage on equal terms to "all inhabitants," as the New Jersey State Convention did in 1776. Then let the Republicans in Congress refuse to admit your Senators and Representatives, if they dare. If so, they will go under. Upon that issue fairly made up, the men of positive convictions would rally round the new and consistent Democratic party. The very element which has destroyed slavery would side with the victorious South, and "out of the nettle danger you would pluck the flower safety."

Respectfully yours, HENRY B. BLACKWELL.

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